

REMARKS

Claims 1-23 are all the claims presently pending in the application. Claims 1, 5-7, 17 and 23 have been amended to more particularly define the invention.

It is noted that the claim amendments are made only for more particularly pointing out the invention, and not for distinguishing the invention over the prior art, narrowing the claims or for any statutory requirements of patentability. Further, Applicant specifically states that no amendment to any claim herein should be construed as a disclaimer of any interest in or right to an equivalent of any element or feature of the amended claim.

Claims 1-23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being anticipated by Apte (U.S. Patent No. 6,654,739). This rejection is respectfully traversed in the following discussion.

Applicant respectfully submits that Apte clearly does not teach or suggest the claimed combination of features.

However, to expedite prosecution, Applicant notes that Apte, which has a U. S. filing date of June 31, 2000 and an issue date of November 25, 2003, is commonly assigned with the present Application, and were commonly assigned at the time of the invention. Thus, since Apte qualifies as prior art only under 35 USC 102(e), under 35 USC 103(c), Apte is not prior art against the present Application. Therefore, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw this rejection.

In view of the foregoing, Applicant submits that claims 1-23, all the claims presently pending in the application, are patentably distinct over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue at the earliest possible time.

Should the Examiner find the application to be other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to discuss any other changes deemed necessary in a telephonic or personal interview.

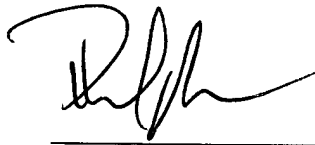
Serial No. 09/837,158
Docket No. ARC920000018US1

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The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in fees or to credit any overpayment in fees to Assignee's Deposit Account No. 09-0441.

Respectfully Submitted,

Date: 9/10/04



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